

Conference Teaches Mothers and Daughters Healthy Behaviors

Issue

As a health educator in Orangeburg County, Yolanda Sumpter sees older women in her community suffer with health problems such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes and arthritis. She also knows that many teens face peer pressure encouraging risky behaviors therefore increasing their chances of one day developing the same health problems their elders' battle.

Forty percent of residents surveyed in Orangeburg County, S.C. think unsafe sex is the most risky health behavior in their community, according to a 2003 Mobilizing for Action Through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) survey. This reinforces the county ranking of No.1 in the state for HIV/ AIDS cases. Also, 29 percent considered being overweight as the most risky. According to the Impact of Chronic Conditions in Orangeburg 2003, 74 percent of our adults are overweight. Orangeburg's current leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer and stroke. Diabetes ranks sixth.

Intervention

Yolanda found a way to address these health issues and risky behaviors by reaching hundreds of teens and their mothers at the Annual Mother-Daughter Conference at Lake Marion High School in Holly Hill. Using approximately \$7,200 in PHHS Block Grant funds, contributions from agencies and a small school budget, this free one-day, event-intensive conference has grown each year. Holly Hill mothers and daughters are learning the importance of healthy habits and developing strategies for dealing with an individual state of health and well being for their entire lives.

The program was successful thanks to community partners such as the Orangeburg Consolidated School District 3 Medicaid Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services Program, CASA /Family Systems, South Carolina State University 1890 Extension, Low Country Healthy Start, and Orangeburg Chapter of the Links, Inc.

To reach a rural population, including low-income families and African Americans, school district administration mandated the implementation of an annual action plan for Mother-Daughter Conference; and required 10 District MAPPS Coordinators attend SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Teen Summer Institute to enhance skills and knowledge.

Impact

At the Lake Marion High School Annual Mother-Daughter Conference, teens and their parents are excited about learning new health information and participating in hands-on activities.

As a result:

- Teen Pregnancy rate according to school homebound reports decreased 35 percent after the introduction of Mother-Daughter Conference in the 2003-2004 school year.
- School attendance increased by 20% since the conference was introduced.
- Teachers have implemented supporting lessons in their classrooms.
- Districts MAAPS Coordinators assessment reports reflected a change in family communication and strengthening between mother-daughters.
- Mother-Daughter Conference attendance continues to rapidly increase.
- More than 2500 teens and mothers were reached in the past six years.
- The school district developed and distributed an evaluation tool for Mother-Daughter Conference participants and shared results with State Department of Education. At least 50 percent of evaluations were completed and analyzed.

Contact: Yolanda Sumpter, Health Educator
Public Health Region 5
1550 Carolina Avenue
Orangeburg, SC 29115 (803) 533-7185